System Configuration Team (SCT)

Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26
Meeting Notes
May 17, 2001

Greetings and Introductions.

The May 17 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at McNary Dam in Umatilla, Oregon. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS. The agenda and a list of attendees for the May 17 meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

1***. Final Draft Report from Grand Coulee Future Load, Spill and Gas Abatement Subcommittee.***

BPA's Jim Irish distributed Enclosure C, the draft final report titled "Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph Dam Joint Operation – Gas Abatement Analysis." He went briefly through the "Objective" statement, the subcommittee membership, the assumptions, data and methodology used in this analysis. Irish said the final draft will be signed on May 30, then delivered to Monte McClendon.

Irish drew the SCT's attention to the graphs following the "Conclusions" section of the document, which lay out the various scenarios used to develop this report; he spent a few minutes going through these scenarios: 84% (235 Kcfs) powerhouse capability, 88% (246 Kcfs) powerhouse capability, 90% (252 Kcfs) powerhouse capability, and 92% (258 Kcfs) powerhouse capability. He then moved on to the report's conclusions:

- The joint operation of Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph for gas abatement appears to have significant benefit in eliminating the likelihood of spill at Grand Coulee with flows less than 7Q10 flows. The various scenarios listed above suggest the actual percent chance of exceeding a given spill value at Grand Coulee is dependent upon the assumed effective powerhouse capability as a percentage of maximum flow. Any circumstance that reduces the amount of generation at Grand Coulee increases the likelihood of spill at Grand

Coulee.

- Spill at Chief Joseph is less sensitive to the assumed effective powerhouse capability of maximum flow at Grand Coulee when discharges are equal to or less than 7Q10, but remain moderately sensitive at 7Q10 when Chief Joseph spill exceeds 133 Kcfs.
- The subcommittee also felt that the range of the assumed effective Grand Coulee plant capacity (235 Kcfs-258 Kcfs) is realistic and reasonable.
- Based on the results of this study, it is the subcommittee's conclusion that for flow up to the 7Q10 value, spill at Grand Coulee could be effectively eliminated by joint operations between the two projects (Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph) involving the shifting of power generation to Grand Coulee and spill to Chief Joseph.

The group asked a few clarifying questions, many revolving around the issue of whether the conclusions of the study will still be valid at an applied TDG standard of 110%, rather than 120%. Irish referred the group to the third point under the "Assumptions" section of the report: "Spill for fish that results in exceedances of the 110% gas standard is considered an interim strategy. In Washington State the TDG standard is up for review in 2003."

What is the expected shelf-life of this report, given its assumptions about load in the region? McClendon asked. Is there some sort of a trigger that will cause this report to be re-evaluated? Three, Irish replied – if the Chief Joseph flow deflectors are not installed, if the state TDG standards change downward, and if, due to unforseen circumstances, load growth in the Northwest dropped 50%.

The implication, then, is that any plans for gas abatement at Grand Coulee are now on the shelf, Hevlin said. Our plan is to forward this report to the Washington Department of Ecology and the tribes, McClendon replied; however, it is probably fair to say that the implication of this report's conclusions is that Grand Coulee gas abatement is now on the shelf. We think it's a good report, he said; it will certainly save the ratepayers and taxpayers a lot of money. We're fortunate that we can operate the two projects as a system, he said.

In response to a question from Bruce Suzumoto, McClendon said there are no additional operational measures to be implemented as a result of this report.

In response to a question from Hevlin, Irish said any further comments on this report need to be submitted to him by Wednesday, May 23 at jtirish@bpa.gov. Again, he said, the plan is for the subcommittee to sign off on this report on May 30 so that it can be submitted to the Bureau of Reclamation.

2. Lower Monumental Stilling Basin Erosion Evaluation – Update.

Hevlin said he had provided an update on this topic at last week's IT meeting; he told the IT that, after reviewing the modeling results, the Corps has become more concerned about this situation, and wants to fix the problem sooner rather than later. The Corps is trying to obtain additional CRFM funds in FY'02 and FY'03 so that this fix can move forward, he said. Dan Katz of COE Walla Walla went through a series of overheads (attached as Enc. D), touching on the

background for this problem, the volume and area of erosion below slab design evaluation, the cause of stilling basin erosion, the dam safety risk in moderate to large flood, and the Corps' plan of action:

- Minimize additional basin erosion by suspending voluntary spill at Lower Monumental and developing patterns for involuntary spill.
- Repair the erosion
- Implement long-term solution.

Katz said the desired schedule for the repairs is as follows:

- Design: first half of 2002
- Construction: 2002-2003
- Normal operation by 2003

Potential funding sources for this work include CRFM, Corps dam safety emergency funds and normal Corps O & M. Long-term solution options include the following:

- Fast-track DGAS measures – complete model study and design to meet 2002-2003 construction window; other features may require more time (2004)
- Outfall relocation (TBD).

Mason noted that October 2001 is the key date by which funds need to be obtained if the above-referenced construction schedule is to stay on track. At this point, however, it is uncertain whether or not the requisite funding will be made available. Mark Lindgren added that the current estimate of the cost of repairs is $10 million.

The group discussed the implications of using CRFM funding for this project; Rod Woodin expressed concern about its potential to bump other projects that would otherwise be funded. Suzumoto asked whether other projects in the basin are in danger of experiencing similar erosion problems; Lindgren replied that the design of Lower Monumental is unique; because of a lack of training walls, debris is able to impact the Lower Monumental stilling basin directly. In other words, he said, we don't believe it is going to be a problem at other projects.

3. McNary Spillway End-Bay Deflectors.

Rick Emmert of COR Walla Walla said the schedule for the installation of the four end-bay deflectors at McNary is as follows:

- May 22 – advertise contract
- June 21 – open bids
- July 3 – Award contract
- July 16 – issue NTP
- July 16-October 15 – bulkhead fabrication
- October 15 – March 30 – install deflectors.

Emmert noted that there is still a chance that a Finding of No Significant Impact will not

be forthcoming; if that is the case, he said, construction will be delayed. The other problem is that we don't have the FY'01 funds -- just over $1 million -- for this contract in hand at this point, said Mike Mason; that funding is in the pipeline, however. An additional $5.022 million is needed for this project in FY'02, as well as $3.6 million in FY'03 and $325,000 in FY'04.

Hevlin suggested that this schedule be presented to FPAC as soon as possible, to ensure adequate coordination. Christine Mallette said she will introduce this topic at the next FPAC meeting. In response to a question from John Kranda, Hevlin said NMFS hasn't necessarily given its blessing to an October start-date for the construction of the end-bay deflectors at McNary; one concern is possible adult delay during the in-water work period. He noted that the Corps' April letter to NMFS did not contain this scheduling information. The thing is, he said, we hadn't planned on starting construction this year. That's correct, said Mason – this is an accelerated schedule. Hevlin said he will talk to others on his staff to find out the basis for the dates NMFS would prefer for the in-water work.

4. Discussion of Proposed Changes to the Criteria and Process for FY'02 CRFM Prioritization Process.

Ken Barnhardt reported that the action agencies now have a final draft of the implementation plan, hopefully to be distributed by the end of this month on the salmonrecovery.com website. There will be a series of meetings over the summer to take regional input; the plan is then to finalize and begin implementing the plan this fall. The main document is a strategic document with goals, performance standards, objectives and priorities; however, a lot of the detail will be found in the hydro appendix, which will also be on the website, as will all of the work plans, Barnhardt said.

Would it be possible to get some copies of the plan to Kathy Ceballos so we can distribute them to the SCT participants? Hevlin asked. Yes, Barnhardt replied.

John Kranda said one of his goals for today's meeting was to begin an SCT discussion of objectives, strategies and performance expectations over time. With that in mind, he said, the action agencies have started thinking about how to look at configuration projects in the context of those performance goals; we feel we need to reexamine our prioritization process, in light of those goals and given the fact that it is unlikely that we will be funded to the degree necessary to accomplish everything we want to do in any of the next 10 fiscal years.

There are some very large numbers on the CRFM spreadsheet starting in about FY'03, Kranda said; when you add all them all together, we see annual program totals in the $160 million to $170 million range. History tells us we'll likely have about half of that amount, he said, which means we'll have some very difficult decisions to make about some key activities and projects.

With that in mind, he said, the federal action agencies have proposed a prioritization scheme that is more closely tied to the BiOp. He distributed Enclosure E, a document titled "Proposed Prioritization Process for FY'02 and Beyond," as well as Enclosure F, titled "BiOp Priorities -- Test Scheme," then spent a few minutes going through these documents. With

respect to Enclosure F, Kranda explained that this describes a five-tier series of priorities, intended to lay out a schedule under which implementation can proceed, given the funding realities the CRFM program is likely to face.

Obviously we need to schedule things out in such a way that there is a likelihood that we can accomplish the key activities laid out in the BiOp over the next 10 years, Hevlin said. Referring to Enclosure G, the most recent CRFM measures worksheet, Kranda noted that the total cost of the package of measures laid out in the BiOp is nearly $1 billion over the next 10 years.

Kranda spent a few minutes going through Enclosure F, noting that the Priority 1 items would mainly be those required to meet the three-year check-in requirements laid out in the BiOp. Priority 2 items would include the following:

- Juvenile studies and improvements for Bonneville, The Dalles, Lower Monumental or other high-potential juvenile passage improvements not already included under Priority 1
- Key system evaluations (such as "D" value or multiple bypass mortality) not already included under Priority 1
- Most significant adult passage facility issues (fallback, ladder temperature, holding) not already included under Priority 1.

Priority 3 items would include the following, said Kranda:

- Juvenile studies and improvements with moderate potential survival benefits
- Potentially significant adult passage facility issues
- Adult migration/unaccounted loss/spawning success studies
- Higher-risk adult passage reliability issues (Lower Monumental?)

Priority 4 items would include the following, under the action agencies' proposed criteria:

- Less-significant juvenile and adult evaluations and improvements
- Lower-risk adult facility reliability issues

Priority 5 items would include:

- Other measures (lamprey, sturgeon, shad passage?).

Will there be some initial screening of projects, particularly looking at ongoing projects that need to be completed? Suzumoto asked. If you did that, it seems to me that you would save yourself a lot of work. I think we'll probably need to say that those are givens, Kranda replied; our position has always been that once a contract has been let, that project needs to be finished. However, he said, we need to be more conscious of the fact that such ongoing projects could consume a good portion of the funds we have available in a given fiscal year.

Woodin suggested that any projects identified for action, but deferred (such as the Lower

Granite juvenile facility), might be placed at the top of the list for consideration in the following fiscal year. Good suggestion, Kranda replied.

Hevlin then distributed Enclosure E, his proposed prioritization process for FY'02 and beyond. He noted that this proposed process does away with the federal, state and tribal caucus elements used in previous years' processes; instead, the SCT would develop its priorities as a group. He noted that, in order to place a specific action or measure within the proper hierarchy, a variety of information will need to be compiled ahead of time:

- Is the measure a BiOp Year 3 Category II item as needed to meet check-in requirements?
- Is the measure a continuing contract from prior year(s) or a final action or report from a prior-year activity?
- Estimate the juvenile survival increase which is expected from implementation of the measure (identify which species and life stages that will benefit and which may not)
- Will the measure to increase juvenile survival be implemented at one of the dams which have lower survival?
- If the measure is an evaluation, does it focus on an identified key uncertainty in the BiOp? Does it provide information for making critical path decisions?
- Is the measure addressing (either directly or through research) a significant adult passage or survival issue? Or a less-critical adult passage issue?
- Will the measure improve the reliability of critical adult fishway components? How critical is the component and what is the risk level if not implemented?
- What is the implementation, operation and maintenance cost of the measure in FY'02 and future years?

Hevlin suggested that it makes sense to try to compile this information at or before the next SCT meeting. Once it is compiled, he said, NMFS would propose the following three-step prioritization process:

- **Finalize Criteria Hierarchy** (by the end of May) which will be used to prioritize measures
- **Compile Required Information** (relevant to the criteria hierarchy) on each measure/action by mid-June.
- **Group Prioritization Process** (to begin at the SCT's June 21 meeting): Through discussion process and utilizing the compiled information, SCT places or ranks each spreadsheet measure in the criteria hierarchy (the basis for the particular rank or placement lies in the compiled information).

How do you anticipate dealing with the sticky issue of the Tribes' unwillingness to embrace the BiOp, and their attempts to introduce their plan into the SCT prioritization process? Woodin asked. That's one reason to get away from the voting process we've used in the past, Kranda replied; we have seen some progress, in terms of getting agreement on the input numbers to be used for the Bonneville modeling, so perhaps this won't be as much of a problem in the

future. Hevlin added that the idea behind getting away from a voting process is to show the basis for the decisions that are made; that basis will lie in the information the SCT pulls together ahead of time.

The bottom line, said Barnhardt, is that, from the action agencies' standpoint, there is a lot of work to do to meet the performance goals laid out in the BiOp, and not a lot of time to do it – we certainly don't have time to make wrong decisions, and we're asking for this group's help in making the right ones.

Most of the information we'll need is in the BiOp, said Hevlin, NMFS is willing to take the lead in compiling this information, perhaps in the form of a database. However, we need the input of this group when it comes to applying that information, and deciding whether Project X should be prioritized above Project Y.

By the end of next week, so that we can finalize our criteria by the end of May, we need to receive any additional comments the SCT participants may have on these proposed prioritization approaches, said Hevlin. They don't have to be formal agency comments, he said, but your individual feedback would be most helpful. Hevlin asked that any additional comments be submitted to him and to Kranda by May 25; it was so agreed. You can also call John and I directly, Hevlin added. Just a heads-up, Hevlin said -- we really need to start working on our FY'02 priorities at the June meeting. We'll make a start next month, and we may need to think about scheduling a two-day meeting to talk about FY'02 priorities in July.

5. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for June 21 at NMFS' Portland offices. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.